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ABSTRACT

Information about the status of working women and their underutilization in the national work force is presented in summary and graph form. Although progress has been made in assuring women equality of pay and nondiscrimination in employment, much work needs to be done to improve the utilization of their abilities. The barriers are still high against employing women in professions other than those traditionally associated with women, and many of the myths regarding women's ability to hold administrative and managerial positions still prevail. The growing share of jobs held by women in the lower paying occupations in recent years is reflected in the gap between the median earnings of women and men. In 1957, the median wage or salary income of women who worked 35 hours or more a week for 50 to 52 weeks was 64 percent of that received by men. In 1968, median earnings of comparably employed women were only 58 percent of those received by men. This document is a revision of ED 019 444. (GB)

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UNDERUTILIZATION OF WOMEN WORKERS

WOMEN'S BUREAU

WORKPLACE STANDARDS ADMINISTRATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

1971 (revised)

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"The fact remains that we cannot reconcile some contemporary remarkable inequalities affecting women with our stated national principle of equality for all citizens."

J.D. Hodgson
Secretary of Labor

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UNDERUTILIZATION OF WOMEN WORKERS

WOMEN'S BUREAU
Elizabeth Duncan Koontz, Director

WORKPLACE STANDARDS ADMINISTRATION
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
J. D. Hodgson, Secretary

NOTE

Data for minority races represent all races other than white. Negroes constitute about 92 percent of all persons other than white in the United States.

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FOREWORD

Recognizing that the 30 million women workers today "are not auxiliary workers but an integral part of the work force," as Assistant Secretary of Labor Arthur A. Fletcher recently remarked, the Women's Bureau believes that an examination of the utilization of this substantial portion of the human resources of our Nation is urgently needed.

Fifty years ago, when the Women's Bureau was founded, our primary concern was the exploitation of women workers. No longer is this true. No longer do we need to place primary emphasis on the establishment of safety standards or the elimination of long working hours and appalling working conditions.

But there are still serious inequalities in the labor market which result in the underutilization of women workers. There are still barriers which deny women the freedom to prepare for and enter employment suited to their individual interests and abilities, and to advance and achieve recognition (monetary or otherwise) to the full extent of which they are capable.

Legislation to assure women equality of pay and nondiscrimination in employment has been passed at the Federal and State levels. The Federal Equal Pay Act of 1963, which was an amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act, assures women equal pay for equal work. However, since many employees are not covered under the Federal act, 36 States have enacted equal pay laws, and five others and the District of Columbia have fair employment practices laws prohibiting discrimination in pay based on sex. Title VII of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of sex. Twenty-three States and the District of Columbia have a similar prohibition.

Implementation of the two Federal statutes has been effective. Investigations under the equal pay provisions had disclosed, by the end of April 1970, underpayments of more than $17 million to more than 50,000 employees during the nearly 5 years of enforcement. Of all complaints received in fiscal year 1969 by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission under title VII of the Civil Rights Act, almost 2,700, or about one-fifth, were concerned with discrimination on the basis of sex.

Considerable progress has also been made in providing equal opportunities for women employed directly by the Federal Government or by Federal contractors. As early as 1923 the Civil Service Classification Act provided that Federal employees receive equal pay for equal work. Discrimination on the basis of sex (as well as race, color, religion, or national origin) in all aspects of Federal employment is now prohibited under Executive Order 11478, administered by the Civil Service Commission.

Discrimination by Federal contractors and subcontractors is prohibited under Executive Order 11246, as amended by Executive Order 11375, administered by the Office of Federal Contract Compliance (OFCC) of the Department of Labor. Sex discrimination guidelines, setting out in detail the regulations governing the implementation of this Executive order, were issued by the OFCC in June 1970.

Despite these steps forward, there is a great deal more to be accomplished. The need to improve women's relative position in the economy is still urgent. Failure to grant women and girls equal opportunities in terms of job training, educational programs, occupational entrance, advancement, and pay creates severe economic hardship, even poverty, for many women and for many families dependent in whole or in part on a woman's earnings.

In addition, failure to utilize fully the talents and abilities of women diminishes our total productive effort, deprives the economy of workers needed for vital domestic programs, and has a depressing effect on the whole job structure.

Occupationally women are more disadvantaged, compared with men, than they were 30 years ago. In 1940 they held 45 percent of all professional and technical positions. In 1969 they held only 37 percent of such jobs. This deterioration in their role in career fields relative to men has occurred despite the increase in women's share of total employment over the same period. On the other hand, the proportion of women among all service workers (except private household) has increased since 1940--rising from 40 to 59 percent.

The barriers are still high against employing women in professions other than those traditionally associated with women, and many of the myths regarding women's ability to hold administrative and managerial positions still prevail. Illustrative of the inequalities women face in entering professional careers in business and industry are the differences in salaries offered to women and men. Women graduating from college in 1970 in six fields of interest were being offered starting salaries from 3 to 10 percent lower than those offered to men in the same fields.

Many women hold jobs far from commensurate with their abilities and educational achievement. For example, in March 1969, 19 percent of the working women who had completed 4 years of college were employed in nonprofessional jobs as clerical, sales, or service workers or as operatives, mainly in factories.

The growing share of jobs held by women in the lower paying occupations in recent years is reflected in the gap between the median (half above, half below) earnings of women and men. In 1957 the median wage or salary income of women who worked 35 hours or more a week for 50 to 52 weeks was 64 percent of that received by men. In 1968 median earnings of comparably employed women were only 58 percent of those received by men.

Moreover, more women than men experience periods of unemployment during the year. Unemployment rates of women have been consistently higher than those of men during the last decade and were 4.7 and 2.8 percent, respectively, in 1969. Therefore, it is not surprising that poverty is more severe among families headed by women than by men workers. An alarming 45 percent of the families headed by women workers of minority races lived in poverty in 1968, as compared with 16 percent of those headed by male workers of minority races.

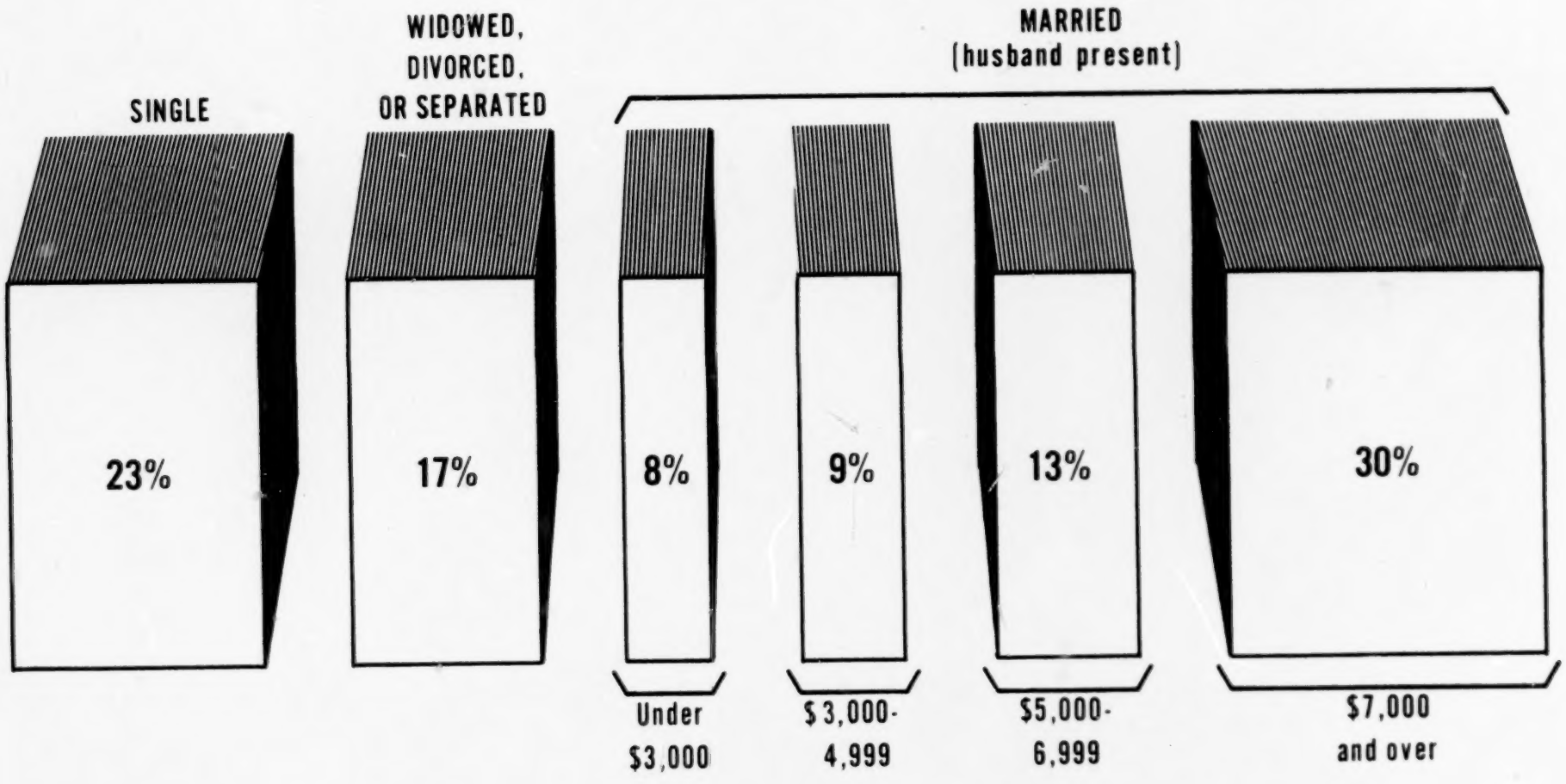
The following brief summary statements and charts document aspects of the underutilization of women workers. It is our hope that these highlights on the economic position of women workers may prove helpful in efforts to assure more effective use of our national resource of womanpower.

Elizabeth Duncan Koontz

Elizabeth Duncan Koontz
Director, Women's Bureau

CHART A.—MOST WOMEN WORK BECAUSE OF ECONOMIC NEED

(Women With Work Experience in 1968)



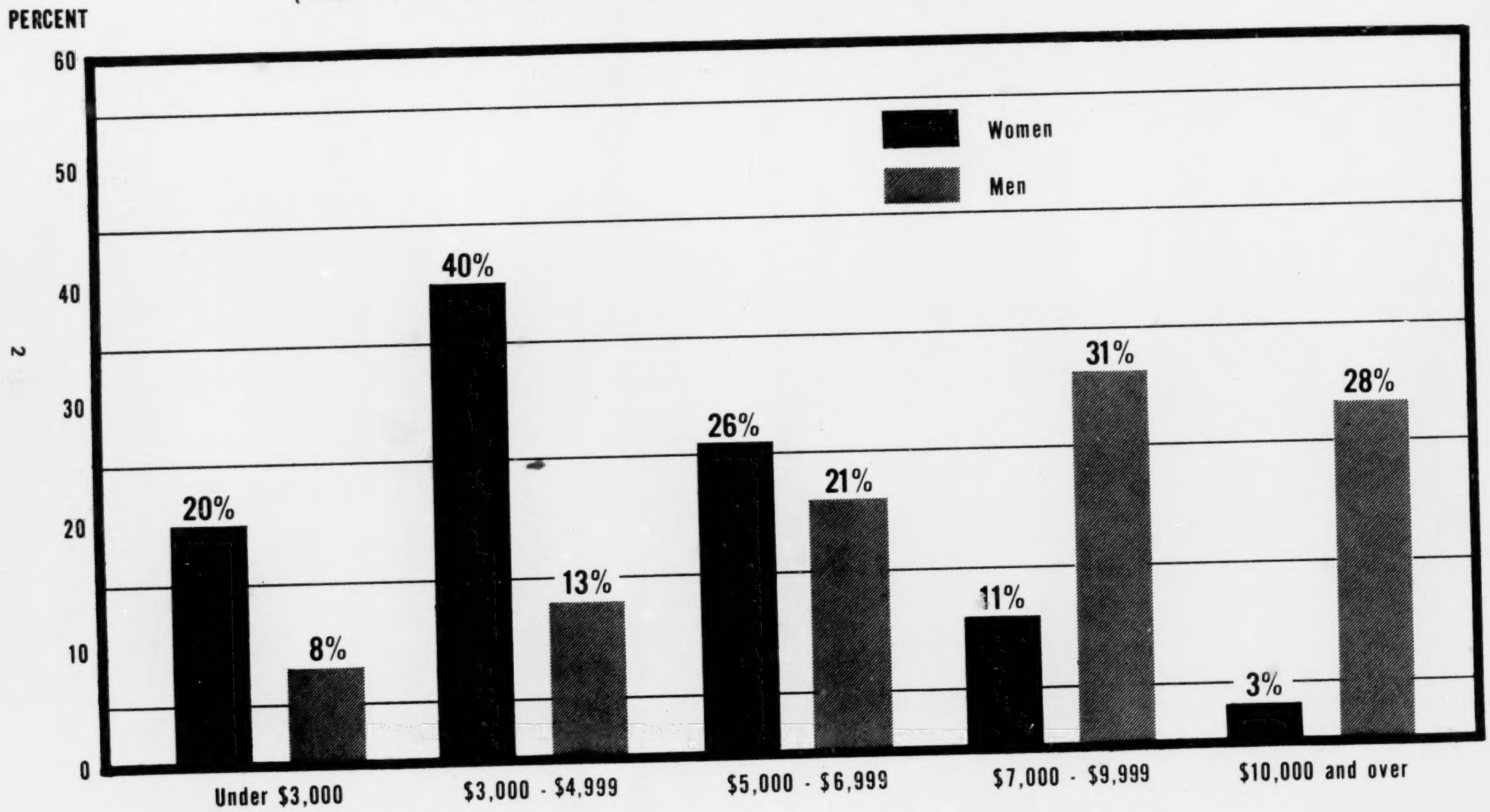
Source: See page 25

Most Women Work Because of Economic Need (Chart A)

Most women work to support themselves or others. Of the 37 million women who worked at some time in 1968, 17 percent were widowed, divorced, or separated from their husbands; many of these women were raising children in a fatherless home. Another 23 percent of women workers were single. In addition, married women whose husbands' incomes are inadequate or barely adequate to support their families often are compelled to seek gainful employment. Eight percent of all women who worked in 1968 had husbands with annual incomes below $3,000. An additional 22 percent had husbands whose incomes were between $3,000 and $7,000 at a time when the annual income necessary even for a low standard of living for an urban family of four was estimated at $6,567.

CHART B.—WOMEN ARE 3 TIMES AS LIKELY AS MEN TO EARN LESS THAN $5,000 FOR YEAR - ROUND FULL - TIME [1/] WORK

(Year-Round Full-Time Workers, by Total Money Earnings and Sex, 1968)



[1/] 50 to 52 weeks a year, 35 hours or more a week.

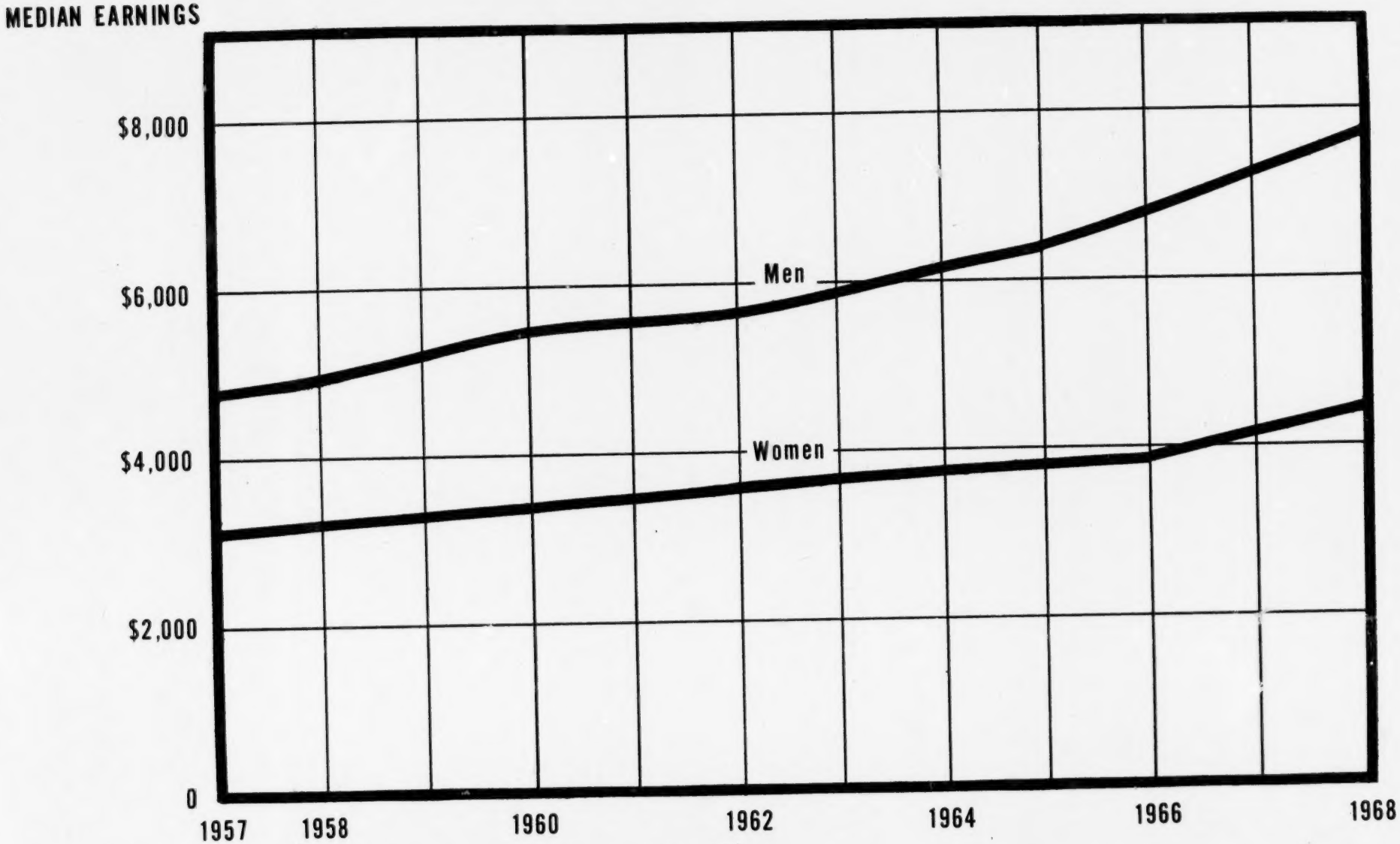
Source: See page 25

Women Are 3 Times as Likely as Men To Earn Less Than $5,000 for Year-Round Full-Time Work (Chart B)

About 3 out of 5 women but only 1 out of 5 men who worked year round full time in 1968 had earnings of less than $5,000. Moreover, 20 percent of the women but only 8 percent of men earned less than $3,000. At the upper end of the earnings scale, only 3 percent of the women but 28 percent of the men who worked year round full time had earnings of $10,000 or more.

CHART C.—THE EARNINGS GAP BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN REMAINS WIDE

(Median Wage or Salary Income of Year-Round Full-Time [1] Workers, by Sex, 1957-68 [2])



1/ 50 to 52 weeks a year, 35 hours or more a week.

2/ Data for 1967 and 1968 are not strictly comparable with prior years since they include earnings of self-employed persons.

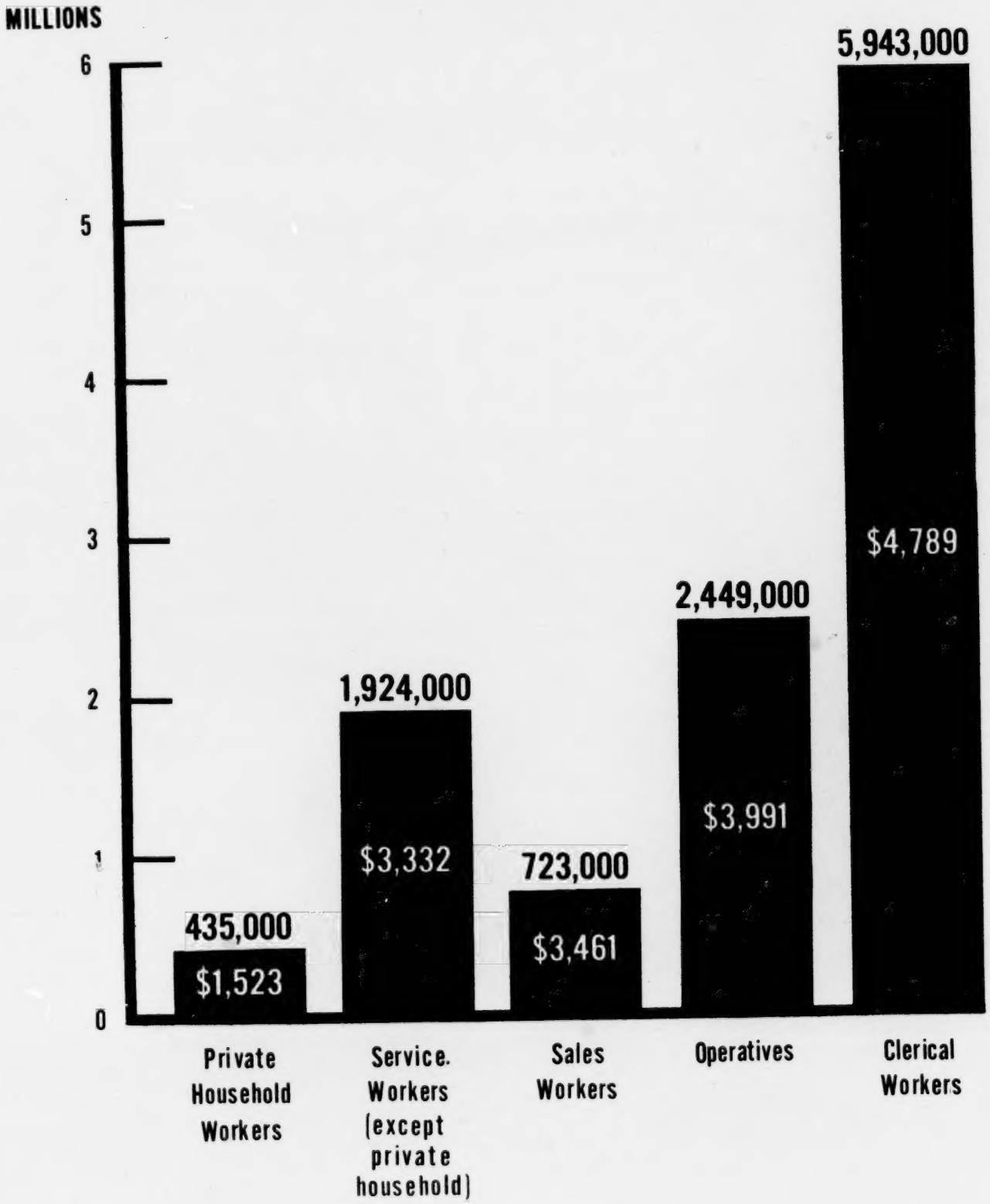
Source: See page 25

The Earnings Gap Between Women and Men Remains Wide (Chart C)

In 1957 the median earnings of year-round full-time women workers were 64 percent of those of men. By 1966 the proportion had dropped to 58 percent, where it remained in 1967 and 1968. The earnings gap amounted to more than $3,000 in 1968, when the median earnings of year-round full-time women and men workers were $4,457 and $7,664, respectively.

CHART D.—MILLIONS OF WOMEN ARE IN LOW - PAID OCCUPATIONS

(Year-Round Full-Time [1/] Women Workers, by Selected Occupations and Median Wage or Salary Income, 1968)



[1/] 50 to 52 weeks a year, 35 hours or more a week.

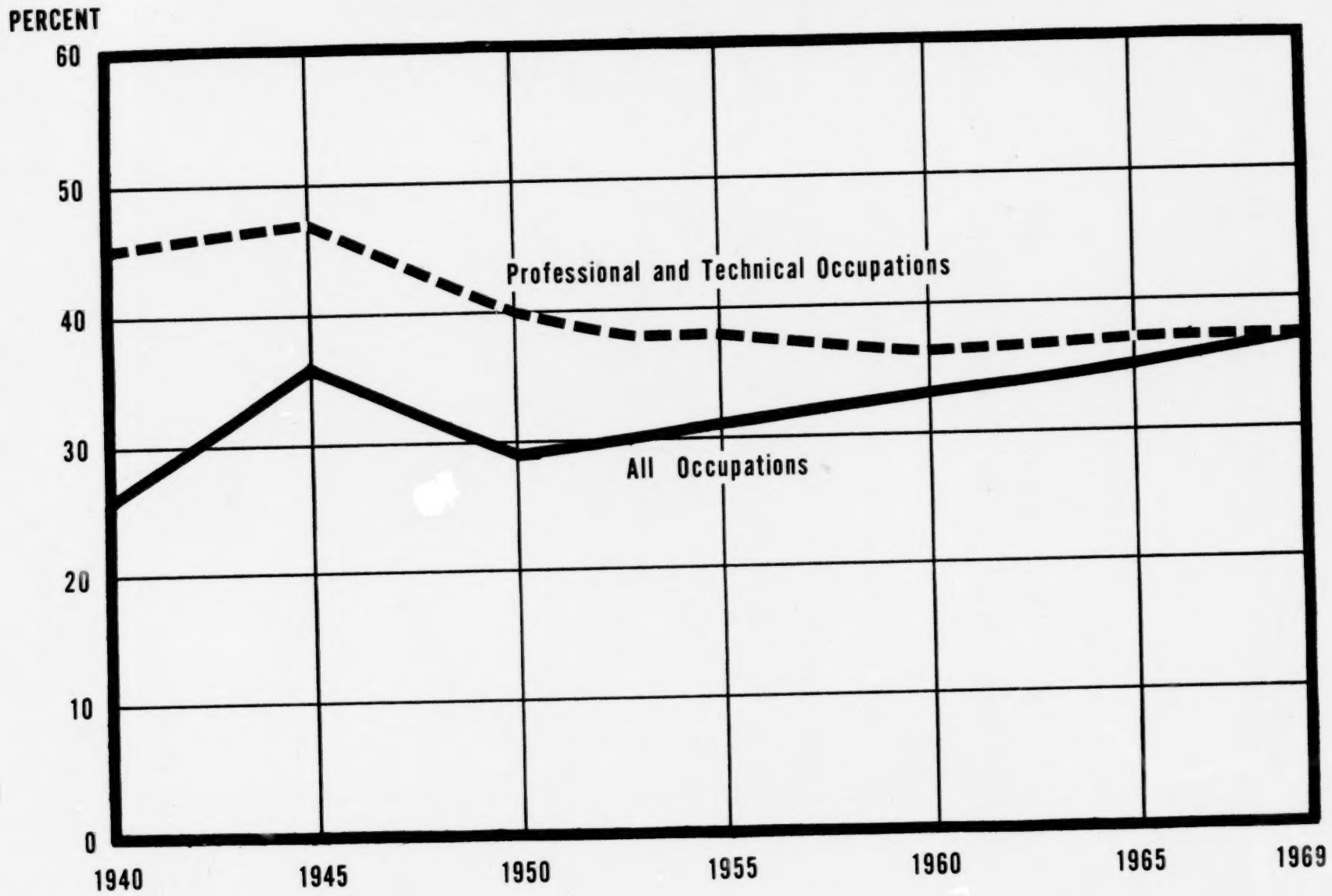
Source: See page 25

Millions of Women Are in Low-Paid Occupations (Chart D)

About 3.1 million women who worked year round full time in 1968 were sales workers, service workers (except private household), and private household workers. Their median wage or salary incomes were $3,461, $3,332, and $1,523, respectively. Another 2.4 million year-round full-time women workers were operatives--mainly factory workers--with a median wage or salary income of $3,991.

CHART E.—WOMEN'S SHARE IN PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL WORK HAS DECLINED

(Women as Percent of Total Employed, All Occupations and Professional and Technical Occupations, 1940-69)



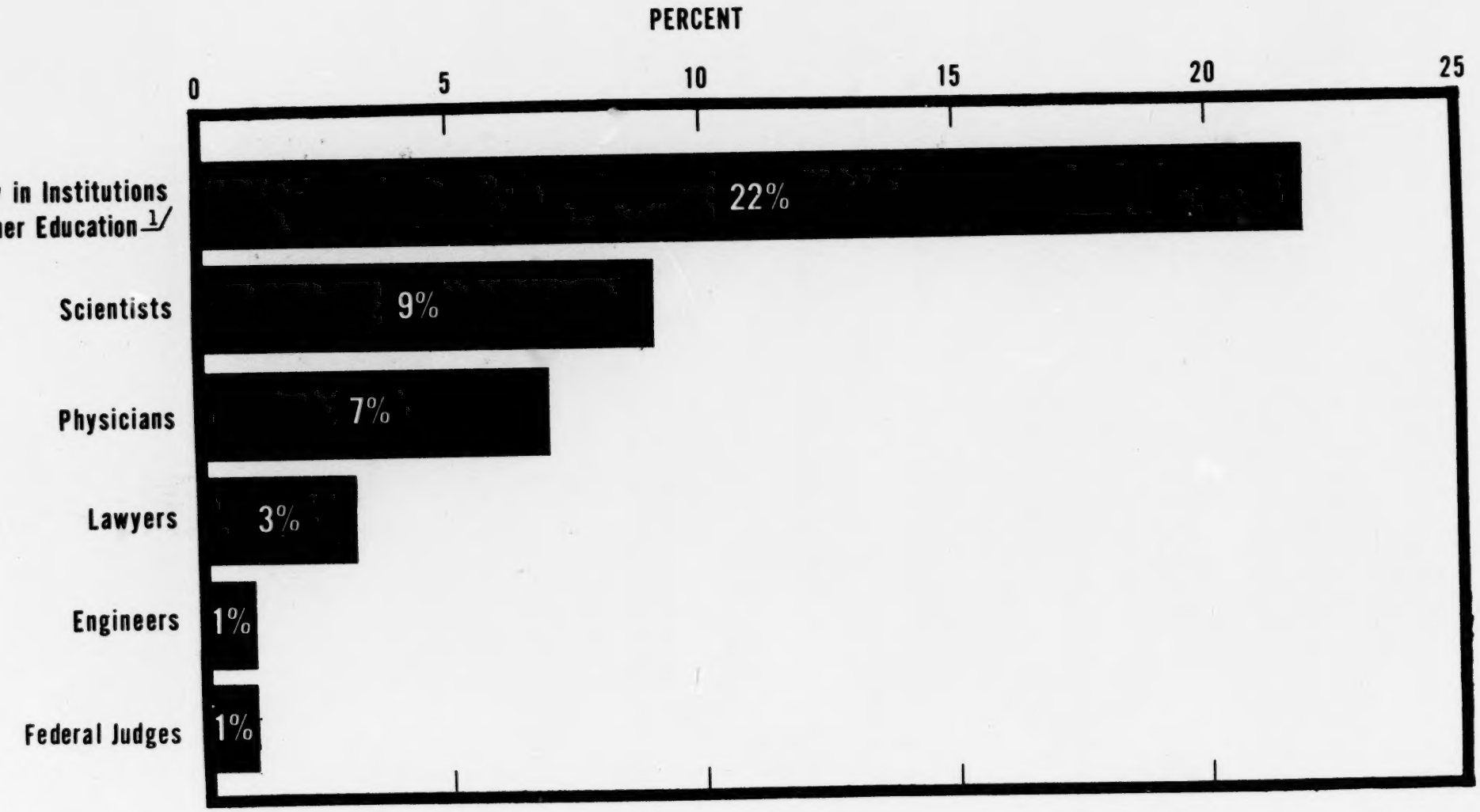
Source: See page 25

Women's Share in Professional and Technical Work Has Declined (Chart E)

Although the number of women employed in professional and technical occupations has almost tripled since 1940, women are a smaller proportion of all professional and technical workers today than they were before World War II. Women represented 37 percent of all professional and technical workers in 1969 as compared with 45 percent in 1940. In contrast, the proportion of women among all workers increased from 26 to 37 percent over the same period.

CHART F.—WOMEN ARE INADEQUATELY REPRESENTED IN LEADING PROFESSIONS

(Women as Percent of Total Employed, Selected Professions)



1/ Includes other professional staff.

Source: See page 25

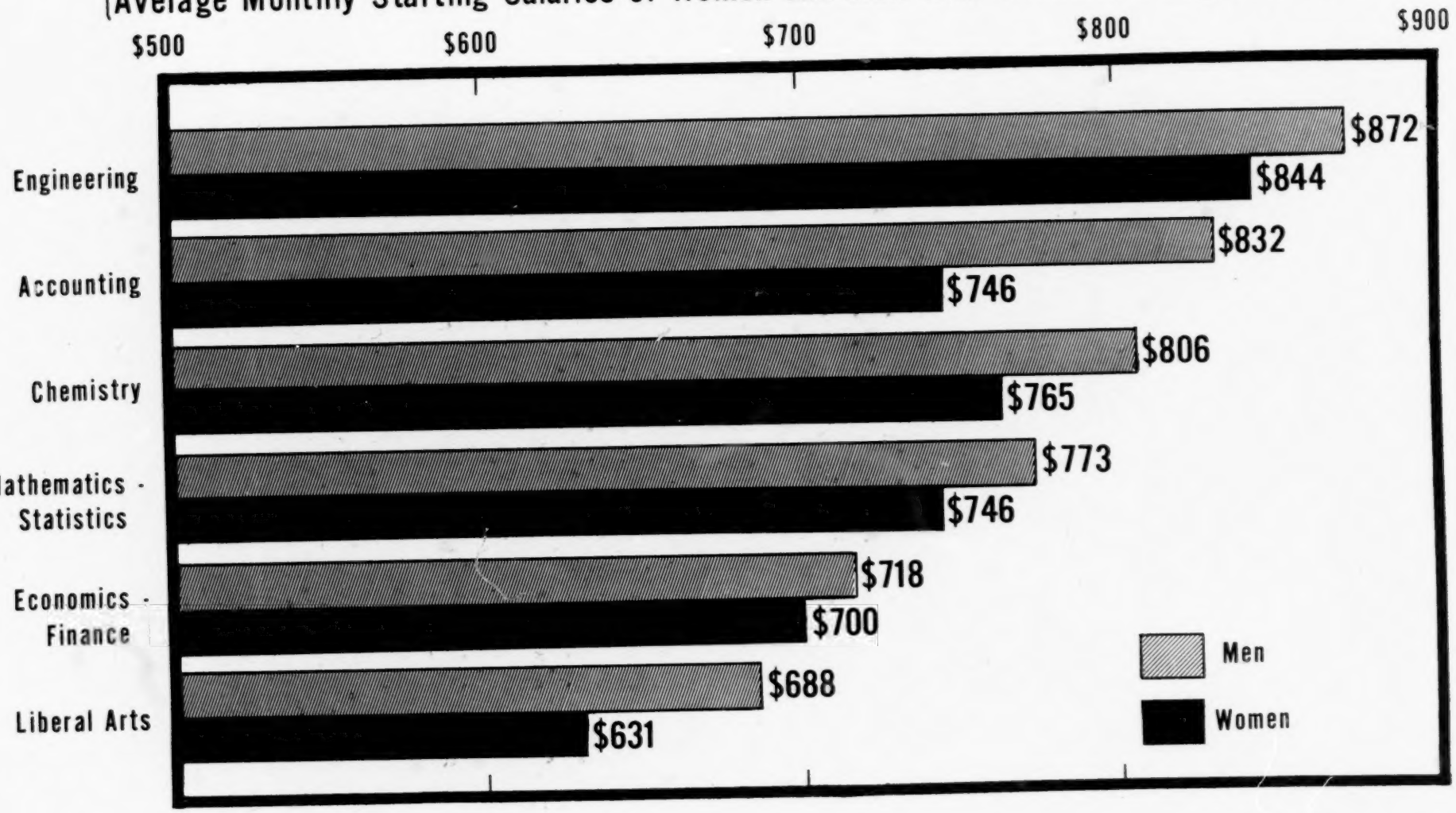
Women Are Inadequately Represented in Leading Professions (Chart F)

Women hold a disproportionately small share of positions in leading professions despite their 37 percent share of all professional and technical occupations in 1969. Although women traditionally have made up a large part of the teacher corps, in recent years only 22 percent of the faculty and other professional staff in institutions of higher education were women. This is a considerably smaller proportion than they were in 1940 (28 percent), 1930 (27 percent), or 1920 (26 percent) and only slightly above the 20 percent they were in 1910.

Women are heavily represented in the health fields, but in 1968 only 7 percent of all physicians were women. Similarly, women had only a token representation among scientists (9 percent), lawyers (3 percent), and engineers (1 percent).

CHART G.—STARTING SALARIES OF COLLEGE GRADUATES ARE LOWER FOR WOMEN THAN FOR MEN

(Average Monthly Starting Salaries of Women and Men With Bachelor's Degrees, 1970)



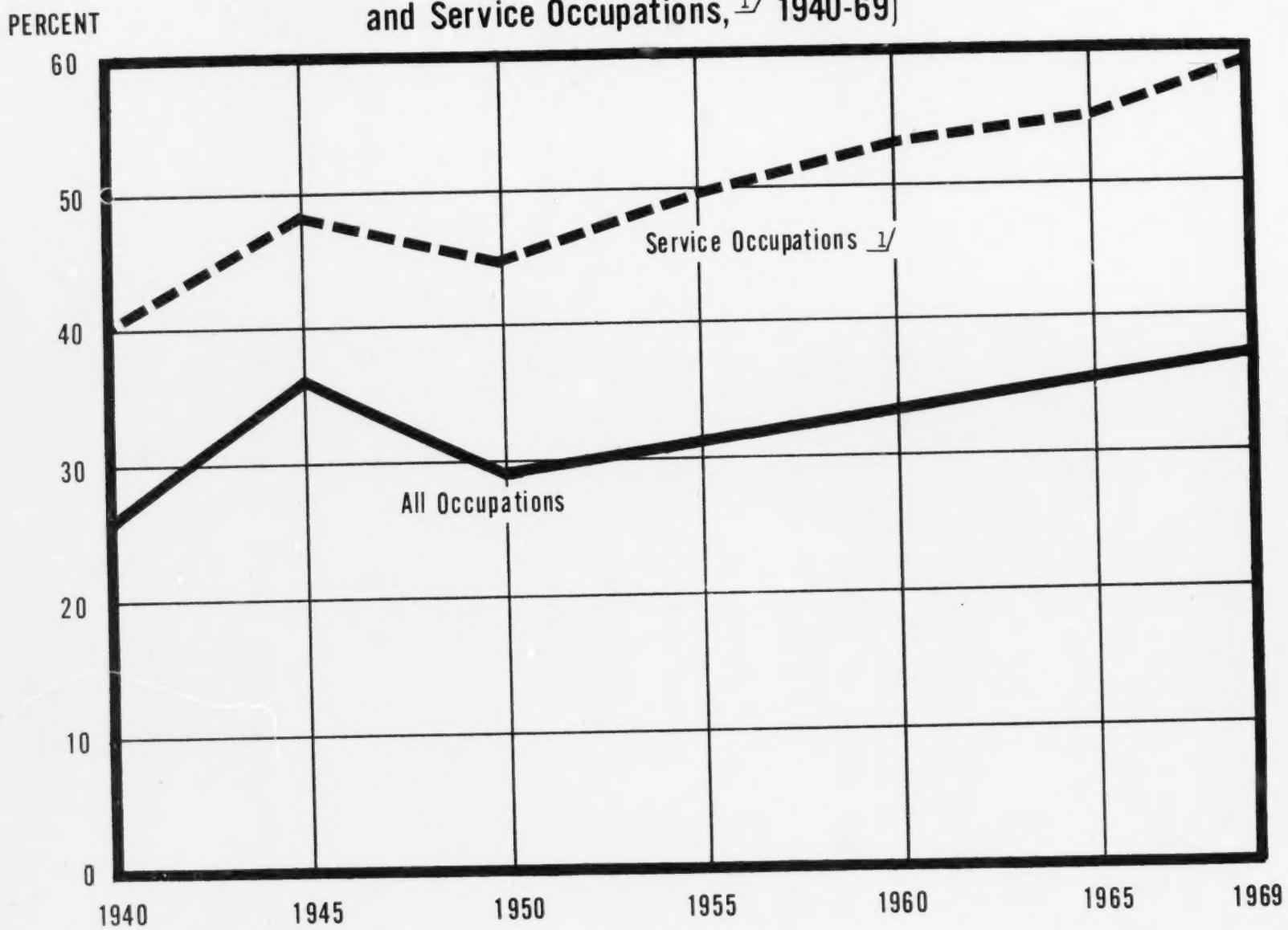
Source: See page 25

Starting Salaries of College Graduates Are Lower for Women Than for Men (Chart G)

Average monthly starting salaries being offered to 1970 women college graduates in six fields of interest by 110 business and industrial firms ranged from $18 to $86 less than the salaries being offered to men college graduates in the same fields. Monthly starting salaries for women were highest and were not far below those of men in engineering, with monthly salaries of $844 for women and $872 for men. In accounting, however, where salaries being offered to men were almost as high as in engineering, the gap between the salaries of women and men was the largest (women, $746; men, $832). Salary differentials between men and women were lowest in the fields of economics and finance (women, $700; men, $718) and mathematics and statistics (women, $746; men, $773).

CHART H.—WOMEN ARE INCREASING AMONG WORKERS IN LESS SKILLED JOBS

(Women as Percent of Total Employed, All Occupations and Service Occupations, 1/ 1940-69)



1/ Except private household.

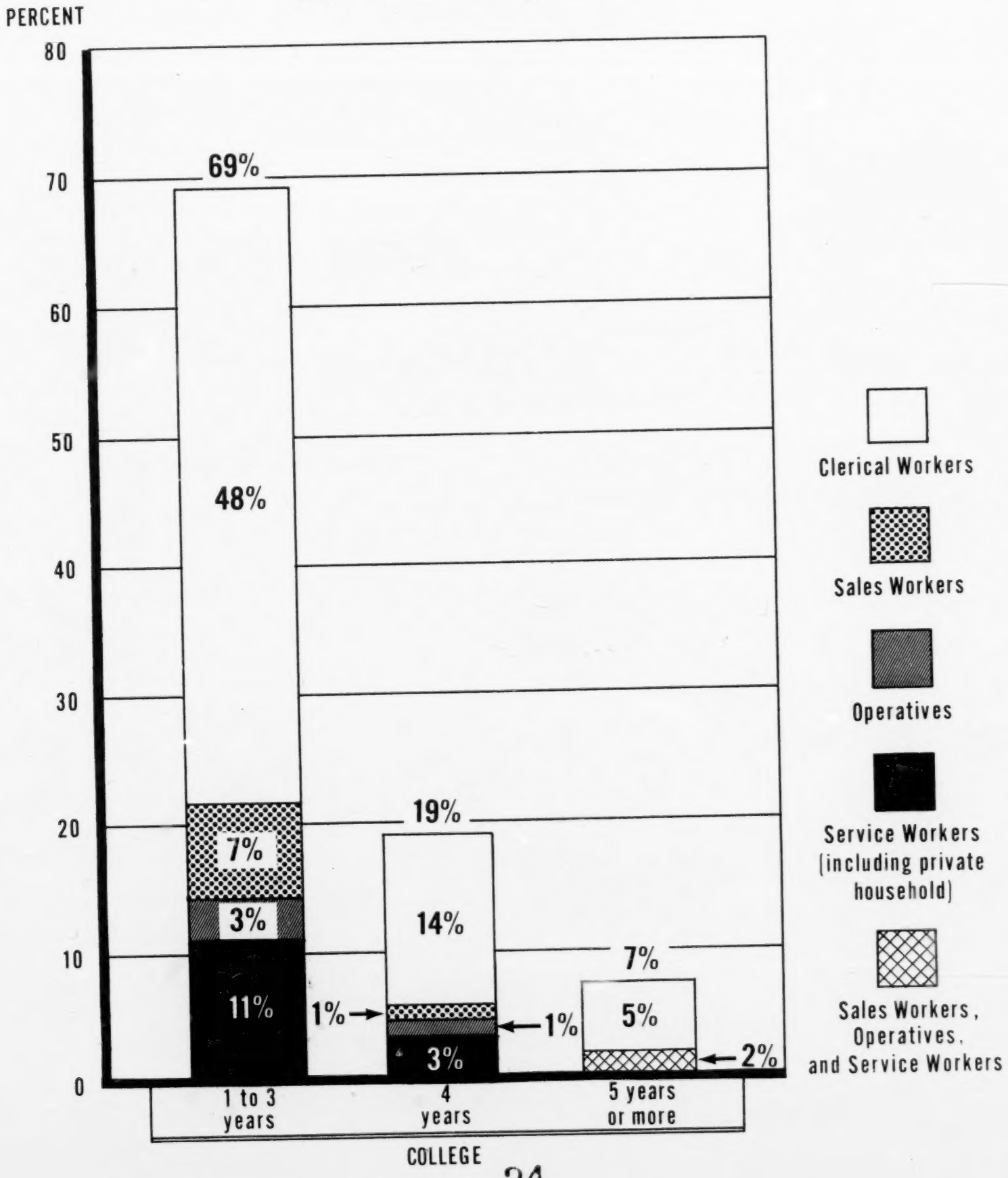
Source: See page 25

Women Are Increasing Among Workers in Less Skilled Jobs (Chart H)

In contrast to the declining proportion of women among professional and technical workers, the proportion of women in the less skilled and lower paid service occupations is increasing. Women were 59 percent of all service workers (except private household) in 1969 as compared with 40 percent in 1940.

CHART I.—MANY WOMEN WORKERS ARE UNDERUTILIZED IN RELATION TO THEIR EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

(Women With 1 or More Years of College Employed in the Less Skilled Occupations, 1969)



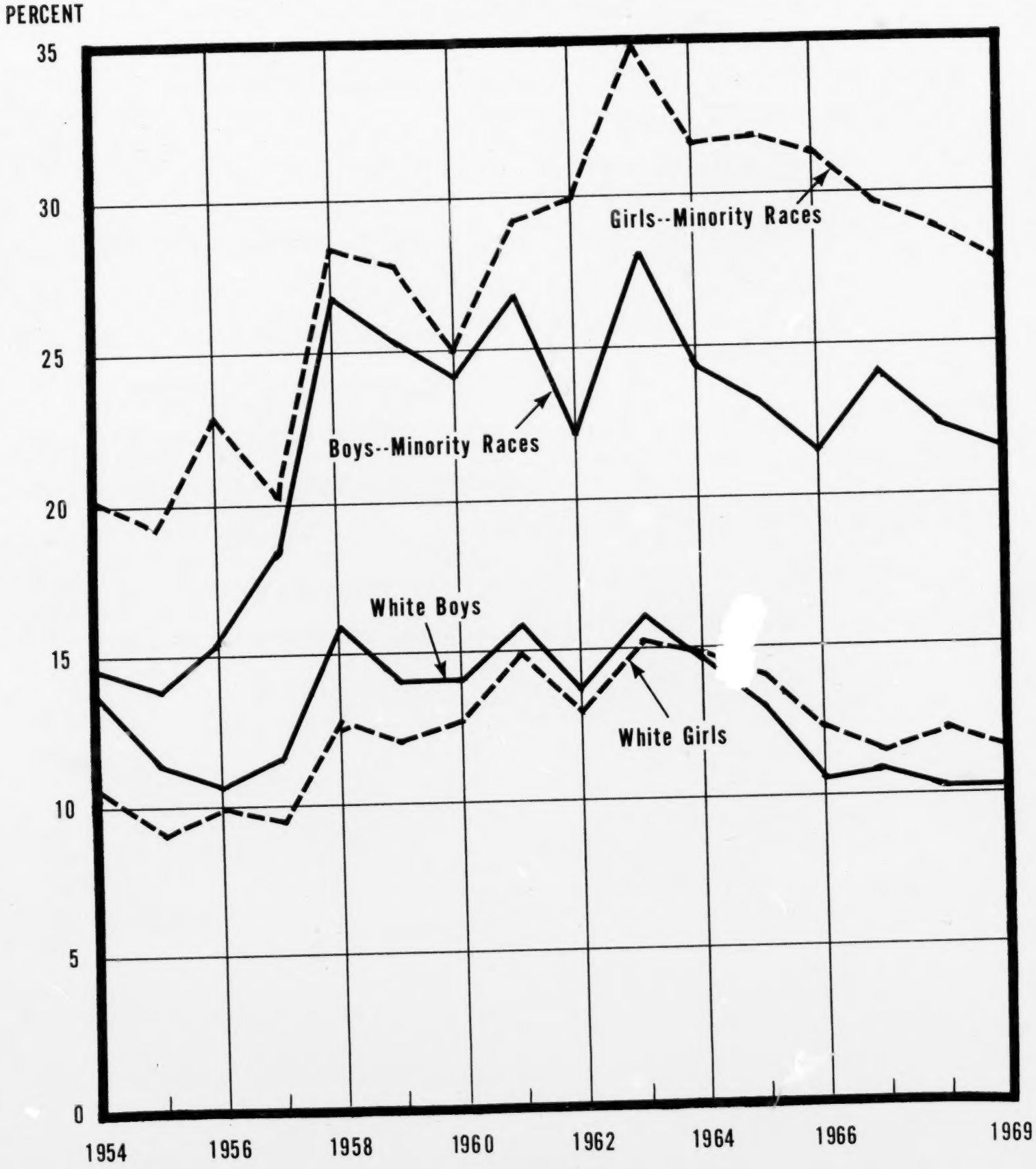
Source: See page 25

Many Women Workers Are Underutilized in Relation to Their Educational Achievement (Chart I)

The educational backgrounds of a great many women are not being fully utilized in their jobs. A startling 7 percent of employed women who had completed 5 or more years of college were working as service workers (including private household), operatives, sales workers, or clerical workers in March 1969. Nearly one-fifth of employed women with 4 years of college were working in these occupations, as were some two-thirds of those who had completed 1 to 3 years of college.

CHART J.—ALMOST 3 OUT OF 10 TEENAGE GIRLS OF MINORITY RACES ARE UNEMPLOYED

(Unemployment Rates of Girls and Boys 16 to 19 Years of Age, by Race, 1954-69)



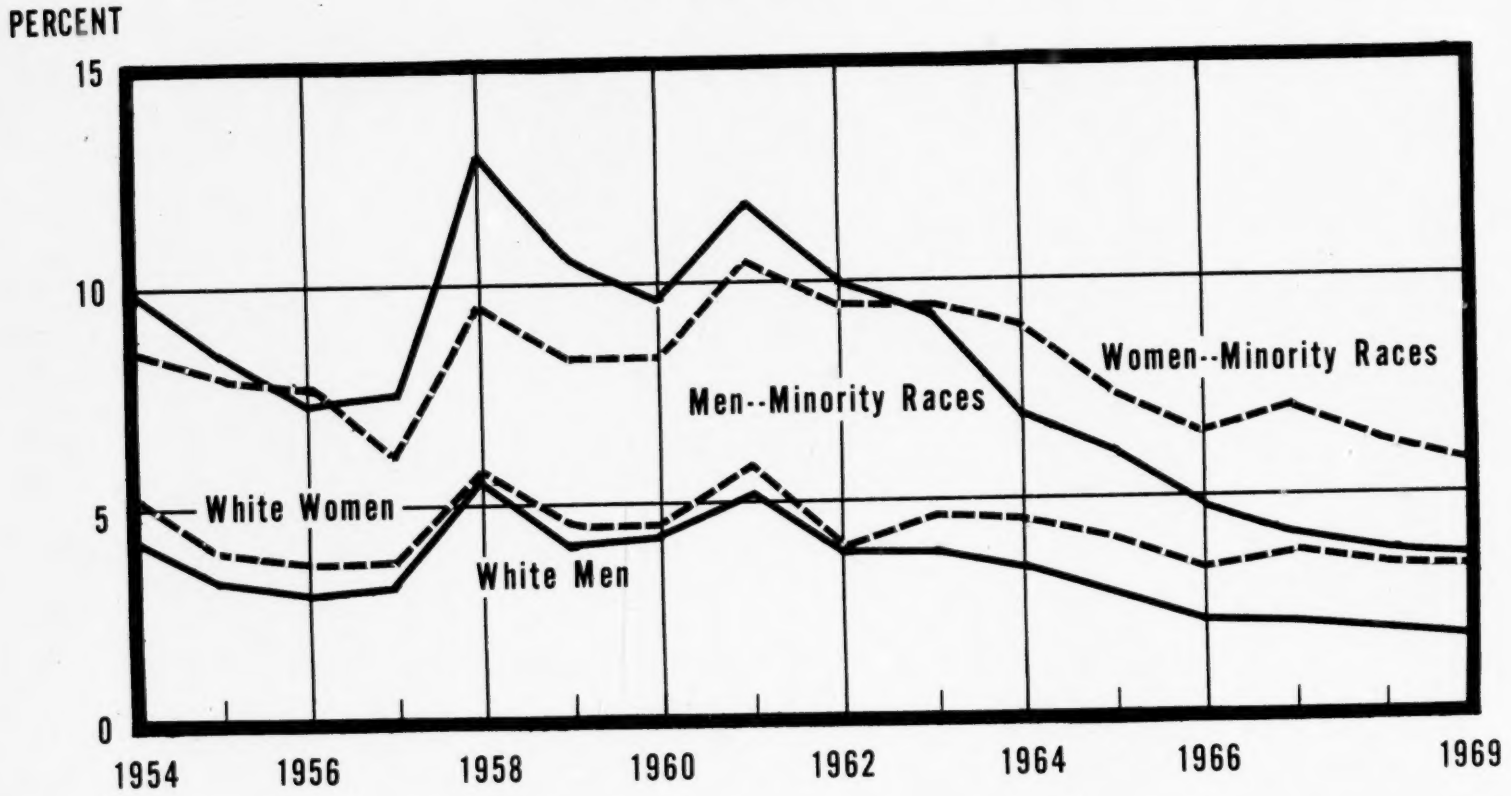
Source: See page 25

Almost 3 Out of 10 Teenage Girls of Minority Races Are Unemployed (Chart J)

Unemployment among teenagers (16 to 19 years of age) is most severe among girls of minority races, whose unemployment rate of 27.7 percent in 1969 was considerably higher than it had been in 1955 (19.2 percent). Next most disadvantaged are boys of minority races, whose unemployment rate was 21.3 percent in 1969. In contrast, the unemployment rates for white girls and white boys in 1969 were 11.5 and 10.1 percent, respectively.

CHART K.—UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG ADULTS IS MOST SEVERE FOR WOMEN OF MINORITY RACES

(Unemployment Rates of Women and Men 20 Years of Age and Over, by Race, 1954-69)



Source: See page 25

Unemployment Among Adults Is Most Severe for Women of Minority Races

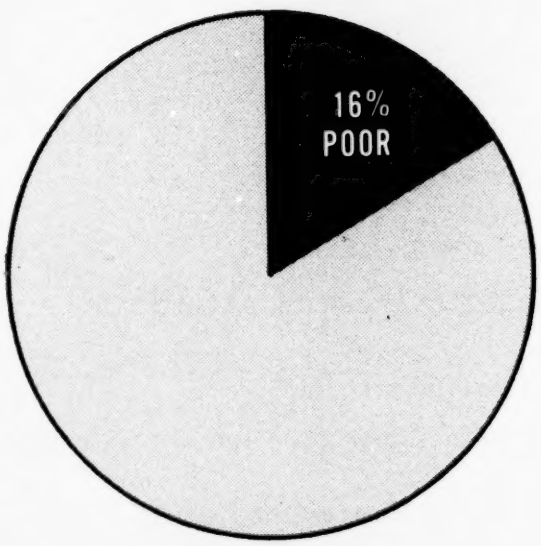
(Chart K)

Among adults 20 years of age and over, unemployment is most severe for women of minority races--5.8 percent in 1969. The comparable rates for men of minority races, white women, and white men were 3.7, 3.4, and 1.9 percent, respectively. Historically, unemployment among adults has been highest for men of minority races, but since 1963 it has been most severe for women of minority races.

CHART L.—INCIDENCE OF POVERTY IS HIGH IN FAMILIES HEADED BY A WOMAN WORKER

(Percent of Families Living in Poverty in 1968 Whose Head Worked During Year, by Sex and Race)

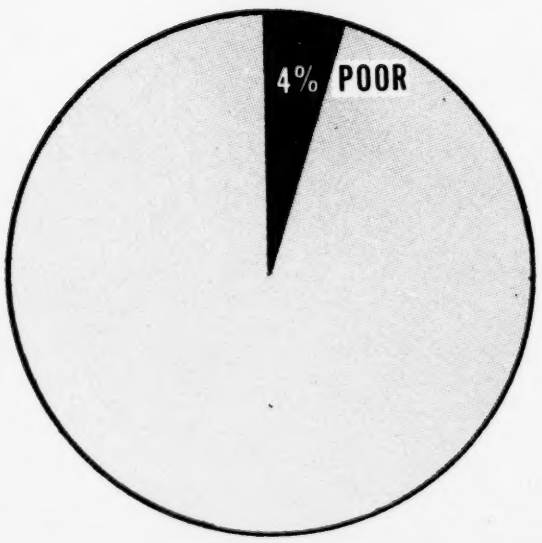
FAMILIES HEADED BY A WOMAN WORKER



White Families
(2,386,000)

Families--Minority Races
(850,000)

FAMILIES HEADED BY A MAN WORKER



White Families
(36,322,000)

Families--Minority Races
(3,245,000)

Source: See page 25

Incidence of Poverty* Is High in Families Headed by a Woman Worker (Chart L)

Many families headed by a woman are poor even though the woman works. Among families headed by a woman who worked in 1968, 45 percent of those of minority races and 16 percent of the white lived in poverty. In contrast, among families headed by a man who worked in 1968, only 16 percent of those of minority races and 4 percent of the white were poor.

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*The poverty level is based on the Bureau of the Census definition of poverty, adjusted annually in accordance with changes in the Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index. Currently classified as poor are those nonfarm households where total money income is less than $1,748 for an unrelated individual, $2,262 for a couple, and $3,553 for a family of four.

CHART SOURCES

Chart A. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: "Marital and Family Characteristics of Workers, March 1969." Special Labor Force Report No. 120.

Chart B. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census: Current Population Reports, P-60, No. 66.

Chart C. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census: Current Population Reports, P-60, Nos. 30, 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 47, 51, 53, 60, and 66.

Chart D. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: Special Labor Force Report No. 120; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census: Current Population Reports, P-60, No. 66.

Chart E. U.S. Department of Labor, Manpower Administration: "Manpower Report of the President and a Report on Manpower Requirements, Resources, Utilization, and Training." April 1967 and March 1970; Bureau of Labor Statistics: Monthly Labor Review, August 1947.

Chart F. National Education Association; U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education; National Science Foundation; and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: "Occupational Outlook Handbook."

Chart G. Endicott, Frank S. "Trends in Employment of College and University Graduates in Business and Industry." Northwestern University. 1970.

Chart H. Same as chart E.

Chart I. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: Unpublished data.

Chart J. U.S. Department of Labor, Manpower Administration: "Manpower Report of the President: A Report on Manpower Requirements, Resources, Utilization, and Training." March 1970.

Chart K. Same as chart J.

Chart L. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census: Current Population Reports, P-60, Nos. 66 and 68.

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